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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 006341

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [SENV](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KRAD](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: DIMONA RADIATION FEARS HEIGHTENED BY VANUNU

STATEMENTS

REF: AMMAN 06305

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Comments made by Israeli nuclear scientist Mordechai Vanunu to a UK paper have inflamed public concerns in Jordan regarding Israel's Dimona reactor. The GOJ quickly countered Vanunu's claims that Jordanians - and others in the region - are at risk from leaks or other environmental effects. However, a popular perception remains that Dimona is a hazard that the government is unwilling to acknowledge. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Vanunu's recent comments specific to Jordan have gained wide attention among Jordanians. He reportedly told a UK-based newspaper that the Dimona reactor mainly operates when winds blow towards Jordan and that a strong earthquake could crack the reactor and cause millions of deaths in the region. He also advised the Jordanian government to examine residents near the border for radioactive contamination and to prepare for possible leaks.

¶3. (SBU) In response to Vanunu's allegations, GOJ Spokesperson Asma Khader issued a statement that the Jordan Nuclear Energy Commission monitors radiation levels constantly near the border with Israel and has recorded no abnormal levels. Khader also restated GOJ support for all international efforts to create a nuclear-free Middle East. Most local papers carried only the GOJ denial of negative effects and not the Vanunu allegations themselves.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Vanunu's latest public remarks have once again raised concerns among the public - and press - about the health effects of Dimona. Since Vanunu's release from prison, his revelations have been repeated by the pan-Arab satellite channels, where most Jordanians get their news. The GOJ may have a credibility problem on this issue, as no independent studies of the health effects of Dimona have been conducted in Jordan. END COMMENT.

HALE